

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5-10, and 12-20 remain pending in the present Application. Claims 1 and 17 have been amended to remove the term “simultaneous”, Claim 9 has been amended to include the “prior to and subsequent to” language found in Claim 17, and Claim 19 has been amended to correct a typographical error. It is believed that the amendments made herein may be properly entered at this time, i.e., after final rejection, because the amendments do not require a new search or raise new issues and reduce issues for appeal. No new matter has been added by these amendments. No additional claims have been canceled or added, leaving claims 1-3, 5-10, and 12-20 for consideration upon entry of the present Amendment.

Reconsideration and allowance of the claims are respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-3, 5-10, and 12-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent (Pat.) No. 6,281,135 to Han et al. (hereinafter “Han”) as evidenced by any one of U.S. Pat. No. 6,495,825 to Chace et al. (hereinafter “Chace”), U.S. Pat. Publication No. 2003/0003243 to Ueno (hereinafter “Ueno”), US Pat. No. 6,021,672 to Lee (hereinafter “Lee”), U.S. Pat. Publication No. 2006/0065624 to Mizumura et al. (hereinafter “Mizumura”), U.S. Pat. No. 5,151,296 to Tokunaga (hereinafter “Tokunaga”), and U.S. Pat. No. 5,322,590 to Koshimizu (hereinafter “Koshimizu”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Applicants submit that Han fails to teach or suggest this limitation of independent claims 1, 9, and 17. Even if Han were liberally construed to have a plasma that exposes the substrate to sufficient intensity of radiation to effect the removal of contaminants, (which the applicants know it does not – the Han patent has the same Assignee) as suggested by the Examiner, it is respectfully submitted that this exposure to the oxygen free plasma process would be simultaneous with and not “prior to” or “subsequent to” as recited in Applicants’ claimed drying processes in each independent claim.

With regard to dependent Claim 6, Han fails to teach or suggest that the substrate would be exposed to radiation of an energy density of about 10 milliwatts per square centimeter to about 1 watt per square centimeter, as recited by claim 6. As discussed in the previous response, once the photoresist is removed by Han's ashing process, the amount of radiation exposure to any underlying low k dielectric would be de minimus and certainly not of an intensity sufficient to effect fragmentation, scission, and/or excitation of contaminants in the low k dielectric layer.

In view of the foregoing, independent claims 1, 9, and 17 and dependent claims 2-3, 5-8, 10, and 12-20, which depend therefrom, are novel in view of the cited art.

In addition, Han and the secondary references relied on by the Examiner also fail to teach or suggest that any radiation source would subject the substrate to an energy density of about 10 milliwatts per square centimeter to about 1 watt per square centimeter, as recited by claim 6. Accordingly, claim 6 is distinctly patentable over the cited art.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and removal of the 35 U.S.C. §102((b) claim rejections.

It is believed that the foregoing amendments and remarks fully comply with the Final Office Action and that the claims herein should now be allowable to Applicants. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance are requested.

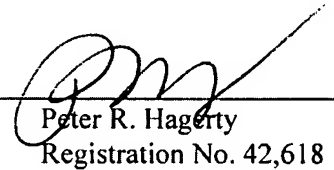
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(ATI-0016)

If there are any additional charges with respect to this Amendment or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 06-1130 maintained by Applicants' attorneys.

Respectfully submitted,

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